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ABSTRACT

It appears that, where there is standardized testing of teachers for certification, there is a decline of black teachers. Although tests can provide valuable information, states must be aware of limitations of such tests and have a clear understanding of what the tests can do. Using tests to say that a teacher is as qualified as another may be impossible because of the diversity of tests used. States vary considerably in the number of assessments, areas covered, and testing times. Teacher education programs should be restructured to accomodate increased success on standardized certification tests. Components which could be added to teacher education programs include: a strong liberal arts undergraduate education; development of competence in the subject to be taught; eight to ten professional education courses; a year-long internship in a teaching school; a one or two-year induction period; and continuing professional development. (CB)

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General Topic: "Strategies for Improving Student Success on Teacher Credentialing Tests: A Key Features Model for Student Enhancement and Program Evaluation, Refinement and Replication"

Specific Topic: Teacher Certification Requirements in the States: What They Are Versus What They Should Be

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Mary Futrell, president of the National Education Association, said the proportion of minority teachers nationwide dropped from 12 percent in 1970 to 8 percent in 1986. That figure is expected to reach 5 percent by the 1990s, when a third of public school pupils are expected to be minority students.[1]

This statement was made at the National Conference on Educating Black Children and reported in the Washington Post on September 8, 1986.

The fact that a third of public school pupils are expected to be minority students is a critical component of the incessant decline of minority teachers. It is insightfully revealed by Cooper with the following statement:

"A less generally recognized but disquieting element of the problem is that the school always has been more than simply a place where teaching and learning occur. It is also a place where culture and value systems are fashioned and built. In addition, the experiences and backgrounds that teachers bring to the school affect the school's pedagogical practices and cultural climate. If history runs true to form, the absence of the black teachers will mean that the school's pedagogical practices and cultural climate will not reflect the perspective of the black minority. Thus, the teachers and the students--and indeed the nation--will be deprived of a component of the educational experience that is increasingly important to our pluralistic society."[2]

The Washington Post article did not report why the percentage of minority teachers is dropping at an alarming rate. There obviously is a reason.

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1 The Washington Post, 8 September, 1986.

2 Constance C. Cooper, "Strategies to Assure Certification and Retention of Black Teachers," Journal of Negro Education, Vol. 55, No. 1, p. 86, p. 47.

Cooper has traced the cause of this decline to a societal concern about the quality of teaching and teachers percipitated by the decline of standardized achievement test scores of high school graduates during the 1960s and '70s.

She indicates that by 1985, competency-based assessment in all of its various forms was a requirement for initital and/or continuing certification in thirty-eight states. More than forty states require some form of assessment of prospective high school graduates. This policy represents accountability. Teachers are to be rewarded on the basis of their own performane and/or their pupils' scores on a standardized measure of learning.

Nationally, the comparable black-white success rate on the various standardized tests is approximately 86 percent for whites and 26 percent for blacks and other minorities. A comparison of white/black achievement on teacher competency examinations in the states of California and Florida indicates that racially discrepant test performance is not a geographical problem. In California there is an 80 percent white pass to a 30 percent black pass ratio. In Florida there is a 90 percent white pass to an under 30 percent black pass ratio. Only 17 of the 140 students who took the state's teacher test at South Carolina State University in the fall of 1984 passed it, while only 2 of 20 applicants passed from Benedict College. Many educators believe that if this push for higher standards in teacher certification through competency-based testing continues, many blacks and other minorities will be screened out of teaching. While there is no empirical evidence to validate these fears, available data support this concern. Minority public school teachers represented only 11 percent of the total teacher population in 1984, and a survey of trends in the employment of black teachers is not encouraging.

Between 1980 and 1985, the number of black teachers declined in seven of the fourteen-member states of the Southern Regional Education Board where the teacher

assessment movement began--Kentucky, Texas, Maryland, Florida, North Carolina, and Louisiana. Georgia, Mississippi, and West Virginia reported that they did not compile this type of information, and no data were available from Alambama, Virginia, Arkansas, and Tennessee.[3]

It seems apparent, then, that where there is standardized testing of teachers for certification, there is a decline of black teachers.

The problem of declining numbers of minority teachers is as clear as the problems with testing.

There are several problems with teacher testing reported by Education USA[4] as a result of the annual assessment conference in Boulder, Colorado.

Tests can provide valuable information, but only if states are aware of limitations of the tests and have a clear understanding of what they can do. There is no recognized standard of performance and the tests don't predict how teachers will use their skills.

The problem of applying test results to classroom performance is a major objection of teachers. The tests cannot measure motivation, dedication and caring, which are just as important as knowledge of subject matter. This acceptance of testing is one of the biggest testing trends. Teacher testing is virtually universal.

But using the tests to say a teacher in one state or district is as qualified as another may be impossible because of the diversity of tests used. A survey of 41 states showed "no two states are the same." They vary considerably

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[3] Ibid, p. 47.

[4] Education USA, published by the National School Public Relations Association, Washington, D. C., June 24, 1985, Vol. 27, No. 43, p. 323.

in the number of assessments, areas covered and testing times. And the results vary. More people are screened out of teaching in states where basic skills and early testing are used than through subject matter tests or evaluations of beginning teachers.

There also is a perception and reality that testing aggravates shortages of minorities, rural and inner-city teachers, substitutes and teachers of certain subjects such as foreign languages. It is necessary to have screens, but the current approaches are inadequate to enhance quality. There is no evidence to indicate that these mitigating factors will have an impact on the testing movement. While the problems with testing exists, the movement is inexorable.

Undoubtedly, teacher education programs should be restructured to accommodate increased success on standardized certification test.

However, there is a danger in this which is highlighted by Witty. She warns: that care be taken to ensure that predominantly black colleges and universities not be programmed alike but that the uniqueness of each is perserved.[5]

This cannot be successfully accomplished if all HBCs revise curriculums to become test-taking preparation institutions. After all, there were untold numbers of successful minority teachers long before the current winds of "change," "reform," and improvement.

The question, then, is what are reasonable certification requirements for minority teachers in any state?

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5 Elaine P. Witty, "Prospects for Black Teachers: Preparation, Certification, Employment," ERIC, February, 1982, p. 21.

A rather succinct statement is postulated by the NEA.[6] It asserts the following:

The following experiences are required to successfully carry out the major functions of teaching:*

- Proficiency in basic skills, if related admission requirements have not been met.
- Instruction in the liberal arts.
- Instruction in critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity.
- In-depth instruction in the subject matter specialty(ies) the education student proposes to teach, as well as in closely-related fields.
- Instruction in human growth and development.
- Instruction in how humans learn.
- Acquire and apply appropriate knowledge and skills effectively for teaching students of varying racial, cultural, linguistic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds.
- Instruction in the physical and intellectual development of students from varying backgrounds and with a wide range of abilities.
- Instruction in planning for teaching.
- Instruction in teaching strategies known to promote student learning.
- Instruction in the decision-making role of the teacher.
- Instruction in using print and nonprint materials and emerging technology.
- Instruction in developing procedures for working with and promoting learning for students with exceptional behaviors.

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6 NEA Student Program Flyer, "Certification of Teachers," January 16, 1985.

- Instruction in classroom management.
- Instruction in learning to practice a broad range of interpersonal and group-process skills.
- Instruction in a broad range of communication skills as they relate to the professional role of the teacher.
- Instruction in a broad range of processes for evaluating student learning.
- Instruction in the unique role, significance, and contribution of schooling in American democracy.
- Instruction in how American schools are supported, governed, and organized.
- Instruction in the rights and responsibilities of teachers and students.
- Instruction in the concepts and differences between governance of education and governance of the teaching profession.

There is no statement specifying certification requirement experiences related to test taking skills. However, this does not negate the reality of the need to accommodate the current teacher testing requirement.

Witty suggests a way that minority educators may use reasonably derived certification standards. She writes:

That teacher education in predominantly black colleges and universities and black teachers in schools work cooperatively to provide greater representation of blacks and minority groups at the policy-making levels in education and on local, state, and national committees, boards, and commissions.[7]

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*These experiences are spelled out in Excellence in Our Schools, Teacher Education: An Action Plan, adopted by the NEA Representative Assembly, 1982.

[7] Witty, op. cit., p. 21.

Surely, minority policy makers would not advocate or postulate policy that eliminates minority teachers as minority students in the public schools increase. Nor would the traditional civil rights groups such as NAACP, Urban League, etc. accept such a policy. It is not likely that informed minority citizens generally would accept such a policy, either.

Certification, then, would be based on a new policy in all states based on the best available research about certification requirements. It would be based particularly on research that has been done to examine whether testing as a certification requirement leads to increased teacher competence. Such research was done by Carolyn M. Everston, Willis D. Hawley and Marilyn Zlotnik. They concluded the following:

Based on our understanding of the research reviewed here and on other evidence relating the transfer of training to practice and adult learning, the model we find most intriguing is one that involves the following components:

1. A strong liberal arts undergraduate education.
2. The development of compentence in the subjects to be taught, which would include the equivalent of a major in the primary field for high school teachers.
3. Professional education of 8-10 courses, many with a related practicum, to be taken either as an undergraduate or after the baccalaureate is received.
4. A year-long internship in a "teaching school" that would be similar in function and cluture to a teaching hospital for physicans.
5. A one or two-year induction period with special support from the employing school system and a school of education.

6. Continuing professional development related to the learning needs of individuals that is distributed and organized in accord with their specific present and future instructional functions and with leadership roles of the individual.

Such a model, which obviously needs more specificity, would allow teacher educators to rethink what is needed to be taught to teachers at different stages of their development as professionals.[8] Again, no mention is made of a test-taking curriculum.

Because the nation now faces a serious teacher shortage, and because there is now pressure to reduce the impending teacher shortage and because there will likely be pressure to stem the tide of the vanishing black teacher, it may be instructive to examine the alternative certification components advocated by AACTE.

It reads:

The fundamental differences between an alternative and traditional program are in: the target audience, the training design, and the length of training, not in program content, rigor or expected outcomes.

The following are recommended components of alternative teacher preparation programs:

1. Selective admission standards including, but not limited to: (a) a baccalaureate degree; (b) assessment of subject matter or area competency; (c) assessment of personal characteristics; and (d) assessment of communication skills.

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8. Carolyn M. Everston, Willis D. Hawley, Marilyn Zlotnik, "Making A Difference in Educational Quality Through Teacher Education," Journal of Teacher Education, May-June, 1985, p. 8.

2. A curriculum that provides candidates with the knowledge and skills essential to the beginning teacher as outlined in Educating a Profession: Profile of a Beginning Teacher (1983).

3. A supervised internship in which candidates demonstrate competency. This field experience should be jointly developed and supervised through cooperative university-school arrangements.

4. An examination that assures competency in the subject field and in professional studies.

In summary, alternative preparation should (a) recognize the unique strengths of prospective teachers from non-traditional backgrounds, and (b) prepare these individuals to meet the same standards that are established for others who enter the profession.[9]

It should be noted from the statement above that "assessments" and "examinations" are advocated. It is unclear, however, whether standardized, traditional instruments are advocated.

Be that as it may, a right thinking nation, a right thinking people, a right thinking profession cannot allow minority teachers to decline or disappear and cannot allow homogeneous test taking curriculum to emerge at HBCs. There is strength in diversity.

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9 Ibid., p. 24.